



**Helping
People Help
the Land**

2008 Farm Bill Changes

- Assistance is made available for conservation practices and planning to address resource concerns related to organic production.
- Assistance is limited to \$20,000 per year and \$80,000 during a six-year period.
- Producers will develop and work toward implementing an Organic System Plan (OSP).
- Producers must have or pursue an organic certification.



The 2008 Farm Bill includes provisions for the use of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to assist organic producers with natural resource concerns and requirements for the National Organic Program (NOP). The EQIP Organic Initiative provides financial and technical assistance to implement approved conservation practices that

address significant natural resource concerns, and develop and implement conservation plans that assist with transitioning to organic production.

Each fiscal year, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will focus financial and technical assistance through the EQIP Organic Initiative to applicants who are:

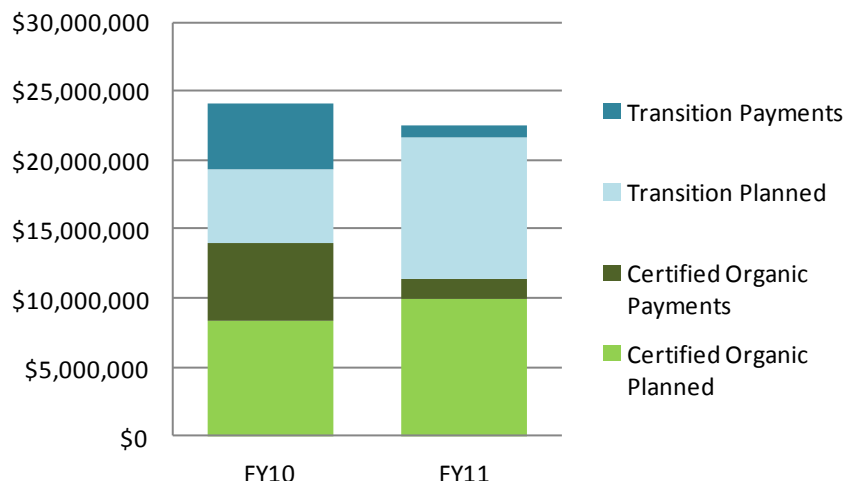
- Certified organic producers,
- Transitioning to organic production, or
- Producers selling less than \$5000 organic products

***2011 saw a 20
percent increase in
the number of
Organic Initiative
contracts***

Reaching More with Less

The 2011 sign-up saw an increase in the total number of Organic Initiative contracts but a decline in the total funding obligated into contracts. The number of contract participants increased from 1,384 in 2010 to 1,667 in 2011, with 83 percent of eligible applications receiving funding. At the same time the average size of the contracts fell, resulting in a drop from just over \$23.8 million funded into contracts in 2010 to just over \$22.5 million funded in 2011.

National Organic Initiative



Top Ten FY 2011 Conservation Practices

(by occurrence)

10. Watering Facilities
9. Pipeline
8. Prescribed Grazing
7. Mulching
6. Fence
5. Conservation Crop Rotation
4. Seasonal High Tunnels
3. Pest Management
2. Nutrient Management

#1 in 2011 is
Cover Crops

What Does the Organic Initiative Do?

The 2011 Organic Initiative provides financial assistance to implement a broad set of conservation practices, help organic producers meet their resource concerns and fulfill many of the requirements in an Organic System Plan (OSP). In 2011, each state, in consultation with State Technical Committees, created state-specific payment schedules. The payment schedules included conservation practices to address activities such as:

- Developing a conservation plan
- Developing a transition to organic production plan
- Establishing boundaries and buffer zones
- Improving soil quality and organic matter while minimizing erosion
- Improving pest management
- Developing a grazing plan and improving grazing resources
- Improving waste utilization and composting
- Improving irrigation efficiency
- Enhancing cropping systems and nutrient management

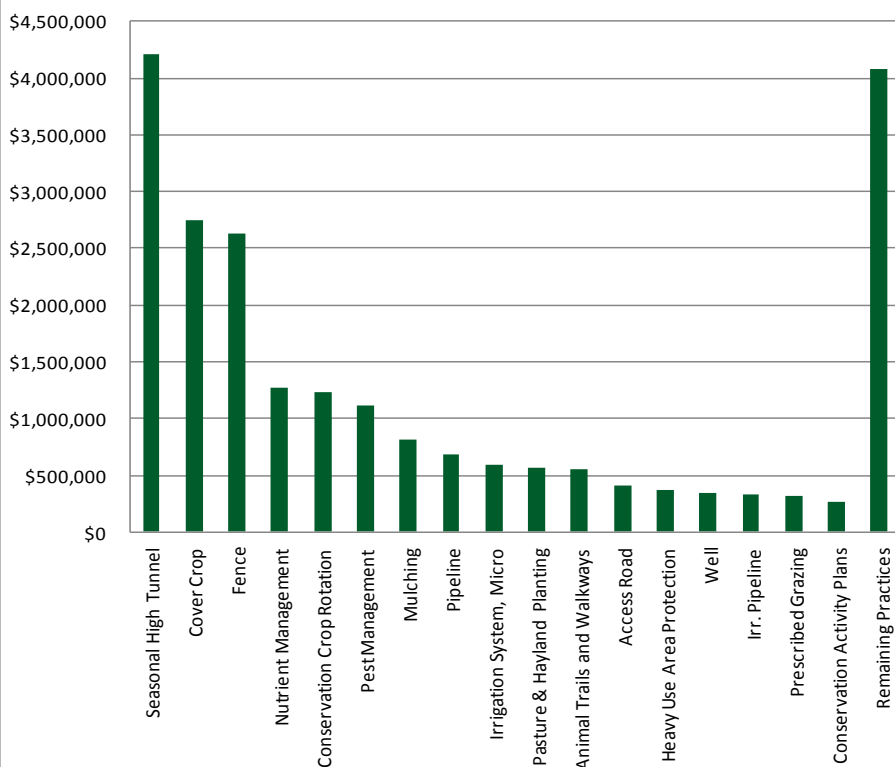
In 2011, a total of 102 conservation practices were offered nationwide. Over 60 percent of the funding went to seven critical practices: Seasonal High Tunnels, Cover Crops, Fence, Nutrient Management, Conservation Crop Rotation, Pest Management and Mulching.

What's New in 2012

The primary changes for the 2012 Organic Initiative include

- Applications meeting or exceeding a threshold score may be approved for an EQIP contract before the end of the ranking period
- Three ranking periods to lengthen the opportunities for organic and transitioning farms to participate
- National required practices offered to promote consistency between states
- Expanded list of Conservation Activity Plans
- Revised environmental ranking process to promote consistency between states

FY 2011 Practice Obligation



The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.